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ABSTRACT

This paper describes progress made between 1973 and 1993 toward creating gender equity in education, with a focus on the Oregon experience. Four topics are addressed: (1) law and policy; (2) language; (3) the culture of school; and (4) school administration. Law and policy are needed at least to change behaviors, though they may not be sufficient to change attitudes. Regarding language, the implications of the words "gender" and "sex" are discussed. Gender is not a biological distinction but is socially constructed. Regarding gender equity in the culture of schools, it is argued that schools can maximize or minimize the differences between males and females. Unless schools directly confront institutional racism and sexism, they are not dealing with the issues. Regarding gender equity in school administration, there are now more women in educational administration, primarily in elementary and secondary principalships. However, very few superintendents are women. Women's move into administration has been accompanied by a change from authoritarian, top-down leadership to participatory leadership. In conclusion, schools continue to be institutions that perpetuate the unearned privilege of being male, white, and economically well off. Gender equity applies to both boys and girls and crosses all racial, ethnic, and class lines. (LMI)

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GENDER EQUITY: A 20 YEAR PERSPECTIVE

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Lewis and Clark College
October 11, 1993

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
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When Ann Jentz asked me to deliver an address to this conference recollecting 20 years in Oregon, I had an immediate memory of a similar conference held in Oregon, 20 years ago at Portland Community College. It was an important memory because it marked my beginnings as a feminist: it was the first time I had ever been in a room of hundreds of women, powerful women. Some women I remember are no longer with us such as Nancy Ryles and Mary Rieke, and other women are very much with us, such as Barbara Roberts. I was just beginning on my doctoral dissertation about the absence of women in educational administration, of which, at that time, there were about 6 percent. Now we are now up to about 30 percent in Oregon. There has been some progress. I remembered the conferences impact on me but I didn't remember the details.

My memory was jogged by a recent conversation with Linda Falkenstein, the organizer for that conference, and now an author and consultant who has just published *Niche Craft, The Art of Being Special*. In 1973 Linda was a social studies coordinator for the Multomah ESD and organized a conference called, "Sexism in Education: Unlearning the Lie." And Linda is with us, let me introduce to you the woman who said, "we just had to do this, we didn't know what would be unleashed, but we had to begin in Oregon. And it was an auspicious beginning. (Introduce LINDA.)

Listen to the title of a conference in 1973, "Sexism in Education: Unlearning the Lie." In 20 years I think we have unlearned the lie – we have gathered evidence, written articles and books, and demonstrated that the experience of girls and boys and women and men is not the same in our public schools. We, especially we in this room, do not kid ourselves that sexism has been erased, or that gender equity has been achieved. We face the truth. We have unlearned the lie. But progress? Where have we come? What have we accomplished?

In my talk with you this evening I will address four topics, comparing them between 1973 and 1993; 1) Law and policy, 2) language, 3) the culture of schooling, 4) school administration. Finally I will address what I consider to be the challenge of educators today – making the invisible visible, and listening to the voices of silence.

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1. Law and Policy

The Education Amendments of 1972 included a single innocuous sentence that reads: "no public school receiving federal funds shall discriminate on account of sex." This we refer to as Title IX as it came down in the regulations passed in 1975. In 1972, Nixon was President, Casper Weinberger was Secretary of the then Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Our own Oregon's Edith Green was active in that legislation and it was sponsored by Patsy Mink in the House and Walter Mondale in the Senate. The activists to change public policy included a core of about seven female civil servants in Washington D.C. who drafted the bill (see Fishel and Pottker, 1977). In 1972 a group of committed, but not powerful people believed it was possible to change public policy. And they did. That may be a difference between the 70s and the 90s; in the 1970s, people believed they could change policy which would change public practice. I wonder how many of us in 1993 would take on such an ambitious agenda? And how many of us would believe we can change practice in public schools?

Those of you who were educators before 1975 may well remember the inconvenience these new regulations brought you – especially in athletics. Gyms already squeezed for practice time for boys teams now had to include girls. One had to gather data on classes that had a predominance of girls or boys and develop strategies to reverse the single sex predominance. There was a flurry of activity from organizations such as COSA, the OEA and the Department of Education which sponsored workshops for educators on how to comply with the spirit and the letter of the law. Indeed it was a heady time – in 1975 we believed that practices in schools would change.

My daughter, Julie, was in junior high school in Eugene at the time of the regulations – she played on the first school-sponsored girls' softball and basketball teams. I recently saw her basketball coach from those days and we were recollecting those first years. As he recalled, "I had to teach them how to dribble – today girls know how to dribble when they try out for basketball." She also took calculus and sciences. She graduated from Lewis & Clark College, received her Master's degree in physical therapy from Boston University and now is a physical therapist in Portland. Julie was among those females who took advantage of the widening door of opportunities in our public schools. I maintain if she were just three years older, not having had the benefits of Title IX, she would be a different woman today.

Beginning in 1980, those ever widening doors began to close slowly in the Reagan administration. Monies which had been appropriated, the such as Women's Educational Equity Act to develop programs, were diminished and enforcement on Title IX slackened. As far as I know, no single school in the United States was called on the carpet for not meeting

the requirements of Title IX. As one administrator said in the mid 80s, "I called the Region Ten office to get some assistance on how to deal with unequal offerings in our school and I was told, "don't bother about that, we're not really enforcing those regulations."

There are those of you who may say, "What is the big deal? This is mere federal legislation and we have seen how our districts have dealt with – or managed to circumvent – the federal mandates calling for non-discrimination." It is a paper issue. You may say public policy is only rhetoric; it does not deal with the real issues of what happens in classrooms, in schools, and in districts. This does not touch me. This is mere rhetoric at the federal level. Yes. I agree, in part. Laws for nondiscrimination require enforcement. Policies for equal educational opportunity require strategy and plans. This has not happened at the federal level. And it has also slacked in our own state; there are fewer dollars for enforcement, fewer dollars for implementation of policy. While there used to be an "equity" official designated at all district and state levels, the reality is this job is folded into several other jobs. Marilyn Lane is now the "equity official" in the Oregon Department of Education, but this office is piled onto many other jobs. Do you even know who the official equity representative is in your district?

I am trying to make a link between the rhetoric, policies, and laws for equal educational opportunities. There is a link, I believe. If there were no rhetoric about providing equal educational opportunities, there would be no policy. If there were no guiding policy, then there would be no law. We in the United States have the most revolutionary legislation in the world to provide equal educational opportunities, on the books.

I have lived abroad and worked with schools in many different countries. In most countries in the world there is no rhetoric, therefore there is no policy, and there are no laws about equal opportunity. While I have always been a critic of our public schools because we do not achieve the equal educational opportunities we aspire toward, we <u>at least</u> aspire toward them. Our rhetoric, and our policy is critically important. If it is not part of our rhetoric, how could we dream toward it to make policy, if it is not part of our policy, how would we ever be able to implement it into law? If we don't enforce law, how can the dream be realized?

With the question of federal mandates, there is always the imbedded question – especially in an individualistic society such as ours: Can legislation change morality? I don't know the answer to that question. While I hope most citizens want to provide equal opportunities to all individuals in our land, their attitudes are not the issue. I am concerned about behavior. If legislation can change our <u>behaviors</u> about what is acceptable and not acceptable in our public agencies, then we have reduced some discriminatory practices. There may be people

who believe blacks should not drink from the same water fountains as whites, there may be people who believe that girls should be prepared to do "women's work" and boys should be prepared to do "men's work." They may believe that, but IF there is a policy, and accompanying laws about individual freedom – which is a founding issue of this country – then individuals will be free from overt discrimination, they will be free to pursue their individual talents, wherever they take them. I don't know if legislation can change morality but it can change what is permissible in our public agencies, such as public schools. Policy and law are important, they make our obligation clear as educators to provide equal educational opportunity that is not based on sex, race, social class or any other "isms."

2. Language

Let me talk about language. Its not only about language but about concepts. Language is our tool to explain and describe the world. In 20 years our language has changed and our concepts have changed.

You probably all know the linguist, Whorf, who argued that language creates our perceptions of the world. His famous example is the 20 or so different words for snow in some Indian languages in Alaska. These twenty so words differentiate the kinds of snow; with such distinctions in language, people see the different kinds of snow. Our language helps form our concepts of the world.

Twenty years ago the conference was called "sexism in education." Today it is called "gender and education." Twenty years ago sexism was a relatively new term, it was then the coin of the realm initiated from "racism," deriving from the Board of Education vs. Brown in 1954. Today we easily incorporate the "isms" – racism, sexism, agism, classism – in our language. Having the concept of "isms" allows us to see the isms. Naming is important, giving names to events and behaviors helps us see events and behaviors. But in 1973 those "isms" were only beginning to be part of our rhetoric and our concepts. In 1973 the words, "gender and education" would not have been used. Gender was primarily a linguistics term with masculine and feminine derivatives.

In fact the word "sexism," according to Linda Falkensteins' report of that 1973 conference was confused with "sex education," and Nancy Huppertz, of the Northwest Regional Laboratory says this is still a confusion she deals with. The word, "sexism" was, and still is, often interpreted as about sexual relations, not about the differential experiences of females and males in public schools.

Most of you are probably remember when you started replacing the word sex with gender. Are

they synonymous? Do you speak of someone with the female or the male gender, instead of the male or the female sex? Some of you are probably confused as our language tries to catch up with our concepts. Colloquially, we use them synonymously, that's O.K.

Technically, gender refers not only to the biological sex of a person but to the social roles prescribed to that sex. It is not a biological distinction, it is a social distinction. At Lewis & Clark we have a Gender Studies Program. It used to be called, "Women's Studies." It was never called "Sex Studies." Gender is inclusive, one cannot study females in our society without studying males. GENDER IS A CONCEPT THAT IS SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED. It is based on sex but it can change. It's only 150 years ago that women could not be teachers, it was man's work. Its only 150 years ago that doctors and psychologists argued that women should not go to school – too much brain activity would destroy their reproductive capacity. GENDER is the meaning we give to people of the male or the female sex. Words are powerful constructs; we have seen our language change with regard to race – "nigger," Negro," colored," "black," and "African American." These words have different meanings constructed over time. Although some may argue this is trivial, I find it an important distinction. Socially we construct the meaning of what it means to be female and male, and that social meaning changes.

3. Culture of Schools

In 1974, Eleanor Maccoby and Carol Jacklin published a book called, *The Psychology of Sex Differences.* They investigated 1600 psychological studies about males and females and concluded males and females are more similar than different. Remember this conclusion, males and females psychologically are more similar than different. Remember it because this conclusion is a contentious debate now in 1993. The ending sentence to this book was that institutions can choose to MAXIMIZE OR MINIMIZE whatever differences there are between females and males through their policies and practices. Translated, that means some school cultures maximize the difference between males and females, they perpetuate the differences that exist in our society. Other schools minimize differences; they confront the gender stereotypes in our society.

Ron Edmonds, who began the studies on effective schools, found some inner-city, primarily black schools did a more effective job of ameliorating the racist assumptions in our society than other inner-city schools. You know the research — effective schools — those with high expectations, clarity of goals, safe secure environments, met head on the institutional racism found in many of our schools.

Although there have been few studies focusing on the culture of schooling and gender, we

know that students bring meaning attached to being female and male students. Schools which minimized differences do not perpetuate social or institutional sexism, but confront the issues head on. (ELGA STORY.)

Remember our students bring with them the "isms" in our society. In one article I wrote with Jane Schubert, we categorized three different levels of equity. When asked about providing equal educational opportunity, we coded responses in this way.

1) Equity as a single event. A role model invited to a class. A day, a period, a special bulletin board.
2) Equity as an add-on. Having a workshop, celebrating Martin Luther King Day or Women's History Week.
3) Equity as institutional practice. Ongoing, it's part of the daily life: investigating tracking systems, exploring bias in text books, looking at disciplinary practices.

Do you read equity as,

- a single event,
- an add-on, or
- an institutional practice?

Some of the most exciting schooling I've seen happens at middle schools where <u>all</u> students explore those activities generally seen to be sex-typed. All students cook, do woodworking, explore health options. Perhaps as we develop our CIMS and CAMS in Oregon, this would be a good place to look at how Oregon schools can minimize, rather than maximize, the differences between males and females.

In 1973 we were just beginning to explore how our social institutions perpetuate sexism. In 1993, there is a full literature investigating these practices. You will learn about them at this conference. You may remember small changes, like ads in the newspapers. Remember the days when the ads read," male help wanted" and "female help wanted." You may remember that the Department of Labor changed the official labeling of jobs - firemen became firefighters, mail men became mail carriers. Schools that have equal educational cultures do not limit the human potential on account of sex. They look at their language, at their policies. What are the policies or practices that limit the human potential in your schools? (KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM STORY.)

Let me give you a few examples of schools where human potential is limited because they deny the "isms" in our society. In 1990, Dick Schmuck and I visited 25 small school districts in

21 different states. We traveled 10,000 miles for six months. We interviewed over 500 people; one question we asked of all the administrators and teachers was "tell me how you provide equal educational opportunities for your students." Except in those districts that were predominately black, such as in Louisiana and Mississippi, or those which included Indian reservations, such as in Arizona, the response was often "huh," or "we don't have any blacks here so we don't have to worry about it." We developed a category called – no data. Despite our inability to get almost NO response from a majority of educators, we continued to ask the question. After all, no data are data. Some responses were, "students are students. I don't care if they are green, yellow or black, they all ride the same buses, eat the same food, have the same classes." Here is an assumption that same is equal. It does not take into account the isms that exist in our society and are perpetuated – overtly or subtly in our schools. Perhaps the worst example of racism in our schools was uttered by a white male elementary principal in the South. His school was about 90 percent black. He said, (listen to the assumptions behind the words), "Colored kids who do well in school have mixed breeding." Takes your breath away, doesn't it?

The only people, I repeat the ONLY people, who could give us a thoughtful answer to our question about equal educational opportunities, were educators who had been involved in GESA (Gender Expectations and Student Achievement) training, that was developed by Dee Grayson, who you will hear tomorrow. GESA at least provided the language, and the concepts to think about equal educational opportunities. I'm glad Dee Grayson is on the road. Of the 25 districts we visited, at least one-half of them were not in compliance with the basic tenets of Title IX, yet these people reported "no problem." If you were asked the question about your school, "what do you do to provide equal educational opportunity to your students" would you reply "no problem"? Because if you do, you are missing what is happening in your school. Unless you confront it, you are not dealing with it.

4. School Administration

In 1973 I was gathering data for my doctoral dissertation, Sex Differentiation in Public School Administration. By the way, I was the second female ever to receive a doctorate from the Division of Educational Policy and Management at the University of Oregon. There is a significant change in 20 years. Now at least one-half of the student body is female. My question was why were there so few women in school administration? In 1973, there were about 6 percent in Oregon. I traveled the state and talked to women administrators, and when there were no women I talked with men administrators about why there were so few women administrators. Let me give you a few quotes I heard in those interviews from male administrators. Frankly, I was shocked that they would say such things to me, as a woman, exploring the topic of women in administration. I remember one male superintendent who

cautioned me, "most women Ph.Ds end up divorced – their husbands just can't stand brainy women." I'm pleased to announce I am not divorced and Dick loves a brainy woman.

One male superintendent said (listen to the words — listen to the assumptions made), "It's easier to work without women. Principals and superintendents are a management team. We need each other for survival. I wonder if we could hang together so well if some of us were women? Could we talk together? I don't have that concern with a guy, he talks the same language. I can count on him. I don't have to take a risk."

Another male superintendent said, "If a woman goes into administration she must understand the workings of a man's mind. So when things are said, they should not be taken from a woman's angle but from a man's angle."

Can legislation change morality? I don't know but we have seen some behavioral changes that somewhat reduce discrimination against women in administration. I know there are some of these dinosaurs still in our schools, but they probably won't say such things out loud anymore—or maybe they do.

What has happened in the 20 years? First, we see more women in administration – primarily in the elementary principalship and the high school vice principalship. We still see very few women as superintendents – in Oregon about 5 percent. Margaret Nichols in Eugene, Yvonne Katz in Beaverton, now Elaine Hopson in Tillamook, Jacki Cottingam in Parkrose, and Carole Ricotta in Josephine County are the only female superintendents of K-12 districts. I wonder what will happen to the several women superintendents in the elementary districts when unification occurs. Want to make bets about the percentage decline of women superintendents in Oregon?

A major happening in the last 20 years are new concepts and constructs of educational leadership. It is an interesting corollary that as women have moved into administration there is a change from top-down, authoritarian, head boss concepts of leadership to leadership that is empowering, facilitative, and participatory. In fact, Sally Hegelson calls this "The Female Advantage." She argues that the new call for leadership is the kind of socialization that women have received in this society – a call for relationship building rather than bossing. Remember, the Maccoby and Jacklin book I mentioned earlier, where they argued that psychologically women and men are more similar than different. This conclusion is being questioned today. Some argue that women are <u>more</u> able to meet the call for the new kind of leadership because of their experiences of being in a female culture.

The kind of leadership that is called for today is more like the gender stereotype of the female than the stereotype of the male. Yes, you say, but I know women who outdo the male stereotypes; but they are authoritarian, top down and see themselves as boss. Yes, I know some of these women too. And these women often don't take their responsibilities for providing equal educational opportunity either. One woman high school principal told me, "I bend over backwards not to give preferential treatment to girls and women on my staff. I want to be an effective administrator, not an effective woman." Yes, there are women who have modeled themselves after the old models of leadership. After all, these were the models available to them. They try hard not to be the gender stereotyped female and model themselves after the old school of leadership. And I tell you it doesn't work – it especially doesn't work for women.

Here is a good use of clarifying sex and gender. Just because the female sex has a stereotyped gender role of being more relational, it does not mean that all biological women are that way. Just as the masculine gender role portrays men as authoritative and decisive, it does not mean all biological men are that way. The stereotyped female gender role may be more in line with the kind of leadership we are calling for today but that will not include all women, nor will it exclude men.

The call for leadership that is facilitative, empowering, engaging and democratic is a major change I see in the last 20 years in educational administration. This is very hopeful.

5. The New Agenda

Finally let me address what I see as our challenge as educators for the future. How to make the invisible visible, and how to listen to silenced voices. You are all privileged people in this room, I am a privileged person. By privilege I mean unearned advantages. By the condition of your birth you have privilege. Most of you are white, that is privileged position in this society. (EXAMPLE: STORY ABOUT MARGARET'S GRANDDAUGHTER.) Many of you are men, that is a privileged position in this society. Then there are earned privileges, All of you are educated, that is a privileged position. You are generally economically secure, economic privilege is important in this society. As privileged persons in this society you can more **than** less have access to all the places you wish to go, you can more **than** less meet with people you wish to meet, you can belong to organizations and feel connected,—not alienated, you can raise healthy children, you have access to medical care and support systems in your lives. Many doors open for you. Compare your privilege with the students in your school. They don't yet have many earned privileges, some have unearned privilege. Many have no unearned privilege. Many face no open doors.

Peggy McIntosh has an article called "White privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." She argues there are privileged attributes in our society and we, who are privileged, carry an invisible package of unearned assets. Our privilege is unacknowledged, it is invisible yet it gives us an advantage over people who do not carry such privilege. You need to understand your privilege if you are to work with students who have little or no privilege in this society.

Attending this conference is a class of mine, the Institute for Executive Leadership, co-taught with Bill Korach, superintendent of Lake Oswego. These people, mostly principals, are earning their Superintendent Certificate. In their work this term we are reading two books, *Beyond Silenced Voices: Class, Race, and Gender in United States Schools* and *Educational Administration in a Pluralistic Society*. *Beyond Silenced Voices* is about those students with little privilege, where few doors are open. The authors, Lois Weis and Michelle Fine, argue that we educators structure silence of many of our students, and then we discount the voices of those who are silenced; we move them to the margins and ignore them. Our public schools were created originally for those who were privileged; white middle class and upper class boys. Girls were "smuggled" into the high schools at the turn of the century but the curriculum didn't change. I argue schools still are institutions which perpetuate the unearned privilege in our society.

What a study of gender has done in twenty years is move us to the margins— to see those who have been invisible and those who have been silenced. As there has been a concentration on sex or gender, we have come to learn these come across all lines. There are females and males in all isms—in race, in class. Females are distributed along all the lines in our society. There are females and males in all the isms. We have seen those who have been invisible and those who are silenced. We need to listen to the voices of students in our schools, of lesbian and gay students who deal with assaults, of young women and young men in lower class communities who struggle for an identity and a job in a transforming global capitalist economy, we need to hear the voices of African American students and African American teachers trying to make sense of a public educational system with deeply fractured lines along race and class. We need to hear the silence of abused girls as they struggle with their identity. These may not be the privileged in our schools, yet these are our students. If we believe that schools are the democratic sphere of our society, that in them and through them we will continually build toward a greater democracy, a greater sharing of privilege, you need to move yourselves to the margins. You need to make visible the invisible, and you need to hear the silenced voices of students in our schools.

I hope through your learnings at this conference that you will, 1) understand your privileged status, 2) find ways to make the invisible visible, and 3) that you will develop a good ear to

listen to the silenced voices in your schools.

Oregon is facing very difficult economic times. Yet simultaneously we are searching for ways to restructure and overhaul our system of schooling. This is a propitious time to make sure we address the needs of those students who are not well served. As you look at multi-age classrooms, as you look at Certificate of Initial Mastery and Certificate of Advanced Mastery, think about how you can apply what you will learn at this conference. Gender equity, remember, crosses all lines. Gender is about both girls and boys. These girls and boys are African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, from lower classes and middle classes, from healthy homes and unhealthy homes. If you pay attention to gender equity, you will, in fact, be operationalizing an equal educational opportunity system. Gender crosses all isms. I wish you well at this conference and in your efforts to achieve gender equity in schools.

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